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AUTHOR	Silverman, Arnold I.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

In Businesses, leaders control an array of delegated powers that are valued or required by followers. The present study is concerned with the power holder, and is an examination of factors influencing a supervisor's use of delegated power when attempting to correct subordinate behavior. In a previous study, conducted in a non-union setting, use of power was found to be influenced by personal factors such as self-confidence and experience as a supervisor. In this study, one aim was to conduct it in a union setting; another aim was to determine if the race of the subordinate influenced the supervisors' use of powers. Findings included that (1) supervisors' use of delegated powers is strongly influenced by personal and situational factors; and (2) conflict may be intensified when employees are unionized. Hence, within an industrial setting, the presence of unions may foster employee independence. This independence is viewed by management as reflecting a lack of compliance and poor attitudes, which in turn evokes coercive responses for management. (Author/TA)

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Use of Leadership Powers in Industry: A Replication and Further Study

Arnold I. Silverman David Kipnis

Charles T. Copeland

Temple University

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In businesses, appointed leaders control an array of delegated powers that are valued or required by followers. These powers include the control of sanctions, control of communication channels, and control of the direction of task performance. When taken in combination with the perceived legitimacy of their positions, these powers provide the means by which appointed leaders can exercise influence and thus have a central role in mediating outcomes for subordinates. Pelz (1951) found that when appointed leaders were deprived of control of powers delegated to them, they were less able to influence subordinate behavior.

Given that the control of power increases a leader's potential for influencing others, one's attention is directed to the question of how leaders use their delegated powers and what influences this use. This question has not received too much attention in Psychology. Psychological research has mainly focused on the target of influence rather than the person exerting the influence. In the present study, however, we were concerned with the power holder. The study was an examination of factors influencing a supervisor's use of delegated power when attempting to correct subordinate behavior. A previous study by Kipnis and

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Cosentino (1969) found that the supervisor's use of power was influenced by situational factors such as the number of men supervised and the complexity of the problem reported. Use of power was also found to be influenced by personal factors such as self-confidence and experience as a supervisor. The previous study was conducted in a non-union setting. One of the aims of the present study was to examine these relations in a union setting. A second aim was to determine if the race of the subordinate influenced the supervisors' use of powers. This question is obviously relevant to industry today where there is increasing concern with problems of racism.

Our study was conducted in an eastern steel plant in which all hourly employees were union members. This, by the way, was not a company type union, but strongly represented its members at bargaining and grievance sessions. The subjects of this study were 66 first line supervisors of which 57 were white and 9 were black.

In previous studies we had measured how power was used through a critical incident technique. In this technique supervisors were asked to describe an incident in which they corrected the substandard behavior of subordinates. A content analysis of these incidents provided us with data on supervisors' use of power. Because of the difficulties involved in content analysis a more objective procedure was used in the present study.

From preliminary interviews a check list was constructed of power - based actions available to the supervisor when attempting to correct subordinates' behavior. This check list covered 27

items which could be classified into a number of categories of power usage. The first area was persuasive power (items here included things such as--I explained how his behavior was causing problems). The second area was expert power; an item here, for instance, was--I took time to show him what he was doing wrong. Third were coercive powers. These were subdivided into face-to-face punishment (including assigning of lower pay-rate jobs and unpleasant work); and administrative punishments (including written warnings, suspensions, and firings). The fourth area was that of ecological change, which was based upon the supervisor's power to reassign subordinates to different jobs.

Using this revised procedure, the first line supervisors were either contacted by mail or in a training session. They were asked to fill out a questionnaire described as a survey of problems that supervisors encounter. The first part of the questionnaire, as in the previous study, asked them to describe an incident that occurred within the past year in which they had to correct the below average performance of one of their employees. This information was content analyzed into four categories describing the type of problem encountered. The first category was that of work--for instance, the supervisor may have written--"This employee was very slow to catch on when you gave him orders and installed equipment improperly." The second category involved problems of poor attitude, for example, "an employee felt that because he was the oldest he did not have to help on a team job." The third category involved the breaking of company rules, coded as discipline--such things as lateness, drinking, and stealing

were included here. Finally, a fourth category included all incidents which could be classified as involving at least two of the previously mentioned categories, for example, a subordinate who did a poor job of repairing an oxygen connector because of a dispute as to whose job it was. This category was coded as a complex problem. Working independently, two coders agreed in their classification of the type of problem in 92% of the incidents. Where disagreement occurred, they were discussed until agreement was reached.

The second part of the questionnaire asked the supervisors what they did about the problem reported and was followed by the previously mentioned checklist. Instructions were to check as many items as applied. Information was also asked on the race of the subordinate, the supervisor's amount of experience and his span of control at the time of the incident.

Now for the results. Table 1 in the hand out gives the distribution of the kinds of problems encountered. It may be seen that the problems reported were divided relatively equally between work, attitude, discipline, and more complex problems. For comparison purposes, the distribution of problems reported by a a sample of non-union foremen previously studied is also shown in the hand out.

Insert Table 1 here.

It may be observed that supervisors of union employees reported significantly more attitudinal problems and fewer problems

of work than did our previous non-unionized group. However when we broke the complex problems into those that also included work and attitude, we found that only attitude problems distinguished between the union and non-union samples. We interpret these findings to mean that the presence of a union may lead to less compliance among employees and hence more conflict and more reports of poor attitude problems by the supervisors.

Turning next to factors that influenced the supervisor's choice of corrective powers. We found three factors of influence. There were: the kind of problem reported by the supervisor, his span of control, and the race of the subordinate.

Insert Table 2 here.

As in the previous study (Kipnis & Cosentino, 1969), the kind of problem encountered by the supervisor influenced his choice of corrective powers. This is shown in Table 2 of the ANOVA out. Problems of poor subordinate attitude evoked supervisors' use of persuasive powers ($p<.05$). By this I mean that when faced with poor attitude, supervisors spent more time talking with the subordinate. It can also be seen that when supervisors encountered problems of discipline, they responded by using their coercive powers. While the previous study found that problems of work evoked reliance upon expert powers, this relationship was not found at a significant level in the present study. An additional finding was that the complexity of the problem also influenced the supervisor's use of powers, that is, in terms of sheer number of actions

taken, more powers were evoked when the problem was complex than when it was simple ($p<.05$). This latter finding was also found in our previous research.

In addition to the type of problem another situational influence on the use of power was span of control. In the present study supervisors directing large numbers of men relied significantly more on administrative punishments ($p<.01$) and ecological change power ($p<.05$), and relied significantly less on their expert powers ($p<.05$) when dealing with problem subordinates. Presumably the decreased mention of expert powers reflects the fact that the supervisor has less time to spend with the subordinate.

Because of differences in methodology between the present study and the previous one, it was not possible to directly compare supervisors of union men with supervisors of non-union men in terms of power usage. However, inspection of the data strongly suggested that supervisors of union men in the present sample more frequently relied upon coercive actions as a means of handling problem subordinates than did the supervisors of non-union men (in the previous sample). In the present study 56% of all actions taken relied at least in part, on coercive power as compared to 32% in the non-union sample.

Next we turn to the race of the subordinate as it influenced power usage. We wanted to know whether supervisors evoked the same or different powers when dealing with white or black subordinates. By the way, in this analysis we dropped our black supervisors. While there were no differences reported in the kinds of problems

manifested by white and black subordinates, white supervisors used their administrative coercive powers more frequently with black subordinates than with white subordinates ($p<.05$), that is, more black subordinates were fired, suspended, given written warnings, and recommended for disciplinary action than were white subordinates. While perhaps obvious, these findings suggest that discriminatory treatment of blacks does not solely exist at the level of selection, but may be detected in supervisory behavior. We suggest that because of prejudice, supervisors may be more prone to punish more harshly infractions by black than by white employees.

To sum up, the present study has again demonstrated that supervisors' use of delegated powers is strongly influenced by personal and situational factors. In addition to replicating aspects of our previous research, the findings suggest that conflict may be intensified when employees are unionized. This finding is consistent with studies of interpersonal bargaining such as those of Deutch and Krause, which suggest that as the bargaining parties become relatively equal in power, conflict and antagonism tend to be more prevalent. Thus within an industrial situation the presence of unions may foster employee independence. Such independence is viewed by management as reflecting a lack of compliance and poor attitudes and in turn evokes (from management) coercive responses.

Silverman, A., Kipnis, D., & Copeland, C.T. Use of Leadership Powers in Industry: A Replication and Further Study.

Table 1

Subordinate Problems Reported by Supervisors

Problem	Present Study (Union Company)	Non-Union*	p
Work	29%	47%	.01
Attitude	26%	8%	.01
Discipline	20%	27%	NS
Complex Problems	26%	17%	.06
Total	101%	99%	
N	66	131	
Total Work Problems	54%	62%	
Total Attitude Problems	47%	18%	
Total Discipline Problems	30%	36%	

*Abstracted from: Kipnis, D. & Cosentino, J. Journal of Applied Psychology, 1969, 53, 460-466.

Table 2

Average Use of Powers as a Function of Problem Encountered

Power	Problem							
	Work		Attitude		Discipline		Complex	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Persuasive	1.3	.6	1.8	.4	1.5	.7	1.7	.5
Expert	2.2	1.3	1.3	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.8	1.0
Coercive	0.3	.6	0.8	1.0	1.6	1.3	1.1	1.0
Ecological Change	0.1	.3	0.2	.4	0.1	.3	0.3	.6

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